

Dear Mr. McCrory:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Caruthersville, Missouri, on April 2, 2001. In your statement you discussed the following items of interest: (a) a preferred plan of operation for the Missouri River; (b) Federal dredging at Pidgeon Industrial Park Harbor; (c) the Memphis Harbor Reevaluation Study; (d) a 12-foot navigation channel on the Mississippi River; and (e) Section 14 assistance at Memphis Harbor. The Commission acknowledges your comments on an independent review of Corps studies.

The Commission appreciates your comments concerning the possible impacts on Mississippi River resources by flow management alterations to the current Missouri River Master Water Control Manual (MRMWCM). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division (NWD) is responsible for the MRMWCM review and update. NWD and the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) are aware of concerns about the potential impacts of various flow management plans on all users and stakeholders, including water-borne commerce interests in the region. The Corps is conducting an evaluation of flow management alteration impacts on Mississippi River resources. NWD and MVD are working to ensure that potential impacts to Mississippi River navigation resulting from an alternative flow management plan for the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System are modeled all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

As you may be aware, the MRMWCM review and update has been delayed to enable the Corps to complete consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. On November 30, 2000, the FWS issued a Final Biological Opinion (BO) for the current operation of the Missouri River Mainstem Reservoir System, the Missouri River Bank Stabilization and Navigation project, and the operation of the

Kansas River Reservoir System. That opinion concluded that current operations jeopardize the continued existence of three endangered or threatened species on the Missouri River. The NWD staff is currently preparing a plan addressing how the Corps will implement the reasonable and prudent alternative contained in the BO. The Corps is committed to the development of a preferred alternative for the MRMWCM revision that precludes jeopardizing the continued existence of the endangered or threatened Missouri River species and supports authorized project purposes.

NWD anticipates release of a Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS) which includes a preferred flow management alternative in August 2001. The RDEIS will be circulated for a 6-month comment period, and workshops and public hearings will be held throughout the Missouri and Mississippi River Basins. As indicated in your statement, nine governors have signed correspondence to the President of the United States requesting they be fully informed prior to the adoption of a modified master manual. The Corps recognizes and plans to fully satisfy the Governor's requests for briefings.

As the National Environmental Policy Act process continues, NWD, with assistance from MVD, will continue to maximize public involvement so that the selected alternative meets the contemporary needs of the Missouri River Basin, minimizes impacts on Mississippi River resources, and provides a shared vision for the future of the rivers. The final BO is available on NWD's website at [www.nwd.usace.army.mil](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil)

In regard to Federal maintenance of the new harbor at the Frank C. Pidgeon Industrial Park, the Commission recognizes the Port Commission's need for adequate facilities to support additional industries. However, additional authorization and funding would be required from Congress for the Corps to dredge this locally constructed harbor.

The Commission supports reevaluation of the Memphis Harbor project to determine a more economically feasible and environmentally acceptable project. The Commission also acknowledges that you give a higher priority to maintenance dredging of the Pidgeon Industrial Harbor than to the reevaluation study. When

funding is made available, the Memphis District will initiate reevaluation efforts.

The Senate Report to the Fiscal Year 2001 appropriations bill included language which urged the Corps to evaluate the current availability of a 12-foot navigation channel and the

feasibility of ensuring a dependable 12-foot navigation channel on the lower Mississippi River below Cairo, Illinois. An engineering analysis of existing conditions regarding channel depth on the Mississippi River indicates that between Baton Rouge and Vicksburg, a channel depth of 12 feet is available 89 percent of the time on an annual basis and 66 percent of the time during August, September, and October. From Vicksburg to Memphis, a 12-foot channel is available 89 percent of the time annually and 65 percent of the time during the August-October period. From Memphis to Cairo, a 12-foot channel is available 89 percent of the time annually and 67 percent of the time during the August-October period. It is probable that as construction of the Channel Improvement project is completed over the next 19 years, the percentage of time that 12-foot navigation channel depths are available will continue to increase. We will continue to monitor the channel depth of the river and assess the need for further evaluation.

In regard to applying for assistance under the Section 14, Continuing Authorities Program for shoreline protection at the Memphis Harbor project, the Commission is aware that a recent field reconnaissance to the impacted areas was conducted by personnel from your office and the Memphis District. The District's initial assessment indicates that the contributing causes/problems for scouring around the drainage facilities are not eligible for protection under the Section 14 program.

Thank you again for your presentation before the Commission. We appreciate receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army  
President Designee, Mississippi  
River Commission